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ABSTRACT

Noting that the skill of debate is essential in a free democratic society, this paper presents a rationale for the use of judging philosophy statements at all intercollegiate debate tournaments. The paper considers: the role of the debate critic; discussion of judging philosophy statements; and advantages to be gained through the use of philosophies. The paper then compares intercollegiate debate tournaments to athletic contests and discusses academic debating as an educational laboratory intended to promote effective communication. The paper concludes with a challenge to the debate community to provide a written judging philosophy at all tournaments. (Contains 29 references.) (Author/RS)

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PHILOSOPHIES AND PRACTICES: THE STATUS OF JUDGING PHILOSOPHIES AT PI KAPPA DELTA NATIONALS: ARGUMENT FOR DISCLOSURE OF JUDGING PHILOSOPHY AT ALL INTERCOLLEGIATE TOURNAMENTS

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Abstract

Without the skills required for reasoned judgment people and nations would lack important abilities needed for effective decision making. Those involved in forensic activities have argued that the skill of debate is essential in a free democratic society.

The purpose of this paper was to present a rationale for the use of judging philosophy statements at all intercollegiate debate tournaments. In order to achieve the purpose, it was necessary to consider (a) the role of the debate critic, (b) a discussion of judging philosophy statements, and (c) advantages to be gained through the use of philosophies.

Next, it was necessary to compare intercollegiate debate tournaments and athletic contests. This was followed by a discussion of academic debating as an educational laboratory intended to promote effective communication.

This writer concluded with the following challenge to the debate community: CAN WE CONTINUE TO CLAIM THE ACTIVITY OF DEBATE IS AN ADEQUATE TOOL FOR LEARNING ARGUMENT, A FAIR GAME, AND AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL WHILE CONTINUING NOT TO REQUIRE DEBATE CRITICS TO PROVIDE STUDENT DEBATERS A WRITTEN JUDGING PHILOSOPHY AT ALL TOURNAMENTS?

PHILOSOPHIES AND PRACTICES: THE STATUS OF JUDGING PHILOSOPHIES AT PI KAPPA DELTA NATIONALS: ARGUMENT FOR DISCLOSURE OF JUDGING PHILOSOPHY AT ALL INTERCOLLEGIATE TOURNAMENTS

Introduction

According to Freely (1993), "debate is the process of inquiry and advocacy" (p. 3). Without the skills required for "reasoned judgment" (p. 3) people and nations would lack important abilities needed for effective decision making. Many of our contemporary social problems cannot be effectively addressed without open debates through the media, town hall meetings, or courtrooms. It is through our use of debating skills that we are able to express ourselves and win over our opponents' minds. Those involved in forensic activities have argued that the skill of debate is essential in a free democratic society.

The purpose of this paper is to present a rationale for the use of judging philosophy statements at all intercollegiate debate tournaments. It is this writer's contention that the use of philosophy statements is justified at two levels. First, from the perspective of debate as an intercollegiate contest it is reasonable to require the use of such statements because, for coaches and debaters, the rewards are great and the stakes are high. In addition, from an instructional viewpoint debate can be considered as a communication laboratory activity. In order to achieve the purpose, it will be necessary to consider (a) the role of the debate critic, (b) a discussion of judging philosophy statements, and (c) advantages to be gained through the use of philosophies. Having examined these issues, it will be helpful to consider the use of the judging philosophy statements at all intercollegiate tournaments by comparing debate to athletic contests and considering a debate round as a communication laboratory.

The Role of the Debate Critic

Just who and what is a debate critic (judge)? A debate critic is someone charged with the two-fold responsibility of deciding which team won the debate and serving as an educator (Bartanen & Frank, 1991; Freeley, 1993; Hanson, 1990). Hensley and Prentice (1982) identify a variety of types of judges based on how these critics arrive at their final decision. Different critics that debaters face include coaches, teachers, former debaters, and interested members of the community.

Nearly two decades ago Faules, Rieke, and Rhodes (1976) offered four standards for debate critics. Their standards include (a) honesty and integrity, (b) open-mindedness, (c) friendliness and approachability, and (d) willingness to educate.

Hensley and Prentice (1982) offer a pragmatic elaboration of what the debate critic's role is in an academic debate. They indicate the responsibilities of critics include (a) determining which team did the better job of debating, (b) ranking and rating each debater in the round, and (c) giving reasons for the decision on the ballot.

Concerning the decision made by the debate critic, Freeley (1993) argues that academic debate should be based on the merits of the opposing teams. He provides four standards for debate critics:

1. Judges must apply their total knowledge of argumentation and debate.
2. Judges must set aside their special knowledge of the subject for the duration of the debate.
3. Judges must base their decision on the debate as it is prsented.
4. Judges must take comprehensive notes during the debate. (pp. 320-322)

In discussing the role of the debate critic, Klopf (1982) warns that debates ought not be decided by the debate critic based on (a) merits of the resolution, (b) partiality, (c) preconceived positions concerning certain arguments, and (d) personal preference for a particular style of debating. According to Faules, Rieke, and Rhodes (1976), debate is complex and it demands much from the critic. Later Klopf (1982) affirms this, "Those who have attempted careful and diligent debate criticism know judging a debate is difficult" (p. 272).

A number of scholars identify the debate critic (judge) as the standard audience in an academic debate (Branham, 1991; Faules, Rieke, & Rhodes, 1976; Freeley, 1993; Fryar, Thomas, & Goodnight, 1987; Hanson, 1990; Hensley & Prentice, 1982; Klopf, 1982; Makau, 1990; Warnick & Inch 1989; Wood & Goodnight, 1987). Further, Hensley and Prentice (1982) contend success in debating is based on each debater's ability to communicate effectively with the critic. The importance of their point is supported by Makau (1990). He claims critical thinking about information is a process of assessing its meaning, relevance, and reliability. Without universal rules, standards, or procedures, those involved in this process must be able to adjust to varied audiences. The critic needs to consider a given argument from the point-of-view of the "recipient" (Warnick & Inch, 1989, p. 30). Their position is based on the belief that "argument" is a form of communication.

According to Wood and Goodnight (1987), debaters should realize that "the debate takes place in the mind of the critic" (p. 215). Rowland (cited in Thomas & Hart, 1987) argues "in order to serve the educational function of debate the debate judge should be simply a debate judge" (p. 192). He claims the primary function of debate is to teach argumentation. Rowland encourages debaters and judges to approach the debate round with a shared acceptance of this position.

It must be pointed out, however, that to date there is little agreement within the forensic community about the relationship between what happens during the debate round and how the critic decides which team won the debate. Some judges evaluate and select winners and losers based speaking skills while others think of themselves as policy-makers or hypothesis-testers or some other type of critic (e.g., game-theory). Ulrich (cited in Thomas & Hart, 1987) writes:

> The judge has a role in the debate distinct from that of the participants. The judge does not enter into the dispute to take a side in the argument and assist one participant in arguing for or against a position, but rather the judge should remain external to the deliberation. (p. 187)

Judging Philosophy Statements

To appreciate the importance of providing judging philosophy statements at all intercollegiate debate tournaments, it is helpful to understand the relationship that exists between the debaters and the debate critic in academic debating. Not all theorists agree that judging philosophies enhance the debate activity (Dudczak & Day, 1991). They suggest that philosophy statements are assumed "ought" statements of how the critic thinks he or she "would" evaluate a

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debate round. Dudczak and Day write that if the decision criteria used in the round does not follow the stated philosophy, they "may fail to actually represent meaningful differences in judges' preferences to which debaters can adapt" (p. 27). However, it has been suggested that due to the nature of Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) debating, such tools of adaptation are needed in the activity (Crawford, 1993a).

In his discussion on "normative expectations," Wood (1992) reminds us that often we get back from debaters what we expect they should give to us. He states "this assumption speaks to the enormous power judges have to shape the activity if those expectations are made know to the debaters" (p. 72). Branham (1991) affirms this "power" saying, "The theory and practice of debate are constantly reshaped by those who participate in it" (p. 232). He contends debate is the only contest in which rules are open to ongoing revision and negotiation during the contest. And, as noted by Goodnight and Zarefsky (1980), a forensic tournament is "a competitive activity in which there are winners and losers" (p. 1). To that end, Hensley and Prentice (1982) suggest debaters learn to "read" (p. 5) their judges.

An important question for debaters and their coaches is, "How does this debate critic judge debates?" Often they are left wondering what arguments or skills this particular judge likes to see in a debate round? Debate paradigms offer a view of how a debate should be judged (Hanson, 1990). There are, however, a great many paradigms and permutations of standard paradigms.

Another question is "how can debaters and judges nudge the transaction in the direction of achieving the goals of debate" (Ehninger & Brockriede, 1978, p. 222)? Sheckels (1984) suggests that because adaptation to the audience is one of the fundamentals of rhetoric, the debaters need to learn to analyze their listeners.

There are a number of avenues available for debaters to take as they attempt to research their audience (Sheckels, 1984). First, if available, the debaters may want to refer to back files kept on various critics. Secondly, the debaters should talk with their coaches because they are likely to have some information about particular debate critics based on prior experience at other tournaments. Thirdly, during the tournament there is likely to be time when debaters may speak with the various debate critics about their philosophies. And, fourth, many judges are willing to disclose information about their philosophies at the beginning of the round. Debaters should avail themselves of these opportunities. Sheckels concludes, "And once you've 'figured a judge out,' be prepared to adjust your assessment periodically" (p. 230). He warns debaters and their coaches that debate theory and practices evolve each year (this writer would suggest changes occur tournament by tournament). Debate critics are always refining their judging philosophy. "Be alert to the possibility of this kind of refining and revising" (p. 230).

Given the dynamic nature of academic debate, with its educational and competitive dimensions, it seems evident that any procedure that would enhance the learning process and provide a tool for identifying the winners and losers during competition should be used. In the mid-1970s Faules, Rieke, and Rhodes (1976) argued that debaters "should want to...adapt to the various audiences which forensics activities provide" (p. 231). "The key is to learn the preferences of those who judge and be flexible enough to adapt" (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991, p. 215). How? What can debaters and their coaches do to "learn" the tendencies of debate critics?

As an answer to the question, Faules, Rieke, and Rhodes (1976) called for "innovations" (p. 232) such as judging philosophy booklets for the National Debate Tournament (NDT). And, nearly 10 years later, Sheckels (1984) reminds debaters and their coaches that most debate judges "have had to, at one point or another, write a judging philosophy" (p. 230). And, he encourages them to take advantage of such statements in order to be able to avoid guessing about the likes and dislikes of their critics.

So the concept of using written judging philosophy statements is not new nor unique. What perhaps is unique is that it is being advocated that written statements should be used at all intercollegiate debate tournaments. Having discussed the role of the debate critic and briefly considered the idea of using judging philosophies, you are wondering, "Is it really necessary to use such statements at all tournaments?" Before considering that issue, let us consider some of the advantages to be gained through the use of written judging philosophy statements for debate critics.

Advantages of Judging Philosophy Statements

As pointed out by Crawford (1993b), judging philosophy statements have been operationally defined as "a document listing a series of questions or issues for the potential judge to answer or describe their [sic] position" (p. 2). He indicates common issues include matters of delivery, proof, procedure, judging paradigm, and the amount of judging on a particular resolution. Such information is usually dealt with in one or maybe two pages.

Because a number of judging paradigms exist in the debate tournament (e.g., skills, issues, policy-maker, hypothesis-tester, tabula rasa, game-theorist), debaters and their coaches are left wondering, "Who is this judge? How can we adapt?" Freeley (1993) suggests that they must be ready to "apply the model most appropriate to a specific debate" (p. 327). In support, Gill (1988) claims that "given the diversity of opinion among CEDA coaches and judges, methods must be encouraged which better allow debaters to successfully persuade their audience, the judge" (p. 98). In their discussion of understanding the role of the judge, Faules, Rieke, and Rhodes (1976) point out that if debaters can gain information about the debate critic prior to engaging in argumentation then it is possible to adapt appropriately to that critic's likes and dislikes. They underscore the "value of the judging booklets" (p. 241).

Balthrop (cited in Thomas & Hart, 1987) disagrees with the prediction made by Cross and Matlon (cited in Balthrop, 1987) that the concern over judging philosophies may become irrelevant. He contends that "the assumptions undergirding these paradigms have pragmatic implications for debaters seeking to devise the most instrumental argumentative strategies" (p. 166). Balthrop elaborates his point by indicating that "it is through this filter that the judge begins to make some sense of the debate and to arrive at the decision as to who did the better job of debating and why" (p. 169).

Balthrop (cited in Thomas & Hart, 1987) claims "the judge is involved in interpretation" (p. 171). And, Bartanen and Frank (1991) call for "some rational criteria to guide their [judges'] selection of paradigms" (p. 150). According to them, selection should be guided by criteria that identifies (a) what good debating is, (b) what produces understandable debates, (c) what promotes knowledge of the subject, and (d) what supports fair play and ethical debating.

In supporting the use of written judging philosophy statements at the Pi Kappa Delta (PKD) National Debate Tournament, Crawford (1993b) notes judging

philosophies are a unique educational tool. He offers several justifications including: (a) philosophy statements are a tool of audience analysis, (b) philosophy statements are a means of "formalizing" (p. 3) the judge's stance on issues, and, (c) philosophy statements serve as a means for better coaching.

It should be understood that this writer encourages the PKD leadership to adopt the use of written judging philosophies at its national tournament. This practice would then be, as noted by Crawford (1993b), consistent with the practices of CEDA and NDT. And, the debate community would be better off because such statements would assist student debaters in adapting to their audiences, assist judges in formalizing their positions on voting issues, and improve the quality of coaching at the tournament.

Despite a well-grounded position in favor of written judging philosophy statements at PKD nationals, Crawford (1993b) stops short of advocating this "unique educational tool" (p. 3) be used at all intercollegiate tournaments. His rationale for the use of the statements is excellent, however, his rationale is soft when arguing against the use of this tool at all tournaments.

What rationale does Crawford (1993b) advance to reject judging philosophies at all intercollegiate tournaments? First, he proposes that if required at all tournaments, the statements would become "a trivial activity" (p. 10). Next, the judging philosophies are not needed because squads travel in "their region" (p. 11). And, finally, his claim is that the statements are not needed at all tournaments because PKD has "much more power to influence the National Tournament" (p. 11).

Respectfully, these arguments against using written judging philosophies at all tournaments do not hold up well. As noted above, debate is an educational activity. It is the opinion of this writer that, as educators, debate critics are professionals committed to provide quality learning experiences to their student debaters. Crawford (1993b) has already noted the educational value of philosophy statements. So why would a committed, professional educator (debate critic) find providing a written philosophy statement to be trivial? Besides once written, the judging philosophy could be photocopied or kept on a computer for easy access, revising, and distribution.

What about the competitive nature of the debate activity? Any coach worth hiring understands an intercollegiate contest like debate is, in part, about winning and losing. Do you know of any coach who wants the debaters to lose? Of course not! Coaching is about helping debaters achieve success. That is, to win the debate. Why would the coach, or the debate critic for that matter, find preparing a written judging philosophy statement trivial?

Consider for a moment Crawford's (1993b) belief that judging philosophy statements are not needed at all tournaments because squads travel in their region? Yes, some do. Maybe even many, but on the other hand, many programs travel beyond their region for the very purpose of gaining more exposure to different judging philosophies. This works if your budget allows you to travel nationally. And, what about those tournaments that attract out-of-district squads (e.g., Southern Illinois University National Tournament, Johnson County Community College, Colorado College, University of St. Louis, etc.)? Would not the debaters benefit if, at every tournament, the debate critics were asked to provide some information about their judging preferences? This author says, "Absolutely, yes."

As for Crawford's (1993b) argument that PKD has more control over its national tournament to require written philosophies; yes, they do. However, if the leadership of CEDA, NDT, ADA (American Debate Association), and PKD were to work together in requiring the statements it would not be overwhelmingly

difficult to accomplish the goal of providing debaters and coaches with judging philosophies at all intercollegiate debate tournaments. If, and certainly this writer finds them to be, written judging philosophy statements are helpful at national tournaments, then why should not every debater benefit from the use of such an instrument at all intercollegiate debate tournaments? Would not this enhance the educational and competitive goals of this activity? In fact, looking at the activity from the viewpoint that the goal is to improve argumentation, it seems an instrument designed to facilitate audience adaptation would be valuable for this reason.

Intercollegiate Debate and Athletic Contests

Looking at debate as if it were a game is justified. By nature people play games (Bartanen & Frank, 1991). They point out that debate is a gaming activity which can be used to enhance education and decision-making skills. Such a view of debate requires participants to "know the rules in advance" (p. 163). Judges may enter the debate round with "preconceptions" and philosophy statements would "allow the debaters to debate about the decision-rules" (p. 163).

Like intercollegiate athletic events, debate is a contest. And, "the most important component of the debate activity becomes the determination of winners and losers" (Bartanen & Frank, 1991, p. 163). The comparison between the two reveals that athletics and debate are games that "have formal and informal rules to guide the players, and success in the game depends on strategically using those rules" (p. 162).

Granted the rules are set in athletic contests. The referees, umpires, and judges enforce those rules. However, it should be noted that athletic officials still must interpret the rules in order to enforce them in a given situation. In the athletic event at least there is a "set" of accepted rules that are written down and available for all to read. When there is no written judging philosophy statement, contestants in a debate round are without the benefit of knowing the "rules" they are likely to be held to in order to win the round. In fairness, the analogy is not perfect, but it is hoped the reader recognizes some similarities and, thereby can support the use of judging philosophies. The extension would seem to be to, not only use such written documents at national tournaments, but to give debaters and their coaches this needed tool at all intercollegiate tournaments.

Intercollegiate Debate as Learning Laboratory

Dowling (1981) offers three views of the debate activity and its value to students: (a) a study of argument, (b) a game/contest, and (c) an educational tool. Certainly it is not the intention of this writer to suggest that debate only has value as a contest or game. In fact, the writer agrees that "in order to advance the educational goals of debate and to keep large numbers of students involved we must do more than provide competition through tournaments" (Stepp, 1990, p. 86).

The activity of debate promotes educational experiences that teach critical thinking and analytical approaches to societal concerns (Thomas & Hart, 1987). Fryar, Thomas, and Goodnight (1987) suggest debates "are designed to resemble 'real world' argumentation settings" (p. x). Such laboratory settings provide student debaters with principles and information they can apply in other situations. Debate offers a "unique opportunity" (p. x) for students to

participate in controversial and argumentative situations as learning.

As Brey (1989) reports, "If one can assume that judging philosophies are an accurate reflection of the nature of the activity, then a well defined lack of consensus seems to exist concerning several key aspects of the activity" (p. 76). As noted above, in part debate is supposed to be an educational laboratory. How are student debaters to gain the most from their experience at tournaments when confusion exists? Brey continues "at this current theoretical stage of evolution, CEDA debate lacks a foundation or consensus along several argumentative and strategic lines" (p. 77). He concludes, "a student's ability to adapt to the particular like and dislikes of a given critic remains a vital part of the activity" (p. 77). Brey identified the need for debaters to "understand the reservations and limitations judges place on topicality, debate theory arguments and evidence, counterwarrants and counter intuitive arguments, evidence, and style and delivery will surely benefit in the long run" (1990, p. 79). This writer proposes the use of written judging philosophy statements at all tournaments would serve to help the student debater to understand the critic and adapt.

Conclusion

In summary, this paper has looked the role of the judge (debate critic), what a judging philosophy statement is, the advantages of such statements, a comparison of debate and athletic contests, and examined the educational laboratory nature of academic debate. The purpose behind looking at these issues was to support the contention that the intercollegiate debate activity should employ the use of judging philosophy statements at all tournaments.

To support the stated purpose of this paper, we turn to Gotcher and Greene (1988):

> Tournament directors, coaches, and judges must be vigilant in the collection and distribution of information concerning the critics evaluating the rounds. Judging philosophies, judge expectations, intervention techniques, and judge backgrounds must be made available to the participants....Procedures must be implemented to make this information available. For example, tournament directors should request a judging philosophy and background information on all judges....What is needed is a concerted effort by all concerned to provide the participants with essential information regarding the critics judging the debate rounds. (p. 93)

This writer offers the following challenge to the debate community: CAN WE CONTINUE TO CLAIM THE ACTIVITY OF DEBATE IS AN ADEQUATE TOOL FOR LEARNING ARGUMENT, A FAIR GAME, AND AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL WHILE CONTINUING NOT TO REQUIRE DEBATE CRITICS TO PROVIDE STUDENT DEBATERS A WRITTEN JUDGING PHILOSOPHY AT ALL TOURNAMENTS?

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